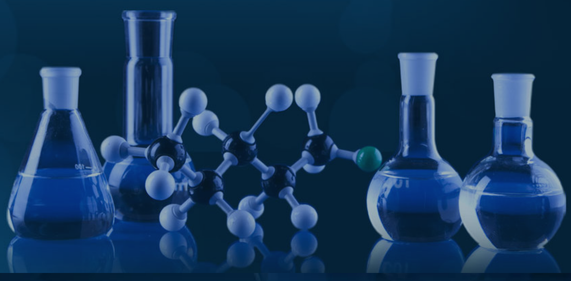

Tooth Decay and TMJ Pain

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Tooth decay is a significant problem around the world, especially among children. In the United States and other developed nations, tooth decay has declined. Some feel this is due to compulsory water fluoridation which began in 1945. However, decay has declined everywhere, even in communities that voted down fluoridation.

Fluoride is finding its way into the food chain, due to the use of fluoridated water to irrigate crops and process food. This is one reason many authorities question the further addition of fluoride to drinking water, mouthwash or toothpaste. Drinking fluoridated water increases the risk of cancer and birth defects.

Dr. Weston Price, D.D.S. studied tooth decay around the world, long before fluoridation began. Some tribes maintained near-perfect teeth while others were plagued with extreme tooth decay. Tribes that maintained their traditional diets generally had excellent teeth (without brushing or flossing). When those same people switched to a 'western diet', including canned food and refined flour and sugar, a rapid decline occurred in their dental health. Dr. Price's book, *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, is a classic nutrition text.

Sugar And Tooth Decay

The link between increased consumption of sugars and increased tooth decay is well known. In natural foods, sugars are combined with fiber, minerals and vitamins that help offset the effect of the sugar to some degree.

Many years ago, Dr. Melvin Page, D.D.S. showed that sugar upsets the delicate balance between calcium and phosphorus in the blood. Sugary foods remaining on or between the teeth also support bacterial growth that leads to decay. Anyone with a tendency to tooth decay should reduce consumption of all sugars. This includes sweet fruits and fruit juices, honey and maple syrup. Sticky, sweet foods are the worst offenders.

Minerals, Vitamins And Decay

Calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc, manganese and copper are all required for proper dentition. Copper helps retain calcium within bone structures. Manganese and zinc help maintain the protein matrix into which calcium and phosphorus are deposited to form healthy teeth.

Vitamin C is needed for collagen synthesis, part of the supporting structure for the teeth. However, beware of chewable vitamin C tablets. Most are acidic and over a period of time may erode the surface of the teeth

Toxic Metals And Tooth Decay

Toxic metals can contribute to tooth decay. Lead and cadmium toxicity interfere with calcium metabolism. A copper imbalance has a destructive effect upon collagen structures. Cadmium and copper toxicity interfere with zinc enzymes needed for collagen synthesis.

Phosphorus And Tooth Decay

Soft drinks are a common item in many diets today. These beverages, including the common cola drinks, are high in phosphorus. Phosphorus combines in the intestines with calcium, magnesium and zinc. Insoluble complexes form that are excreted in the feces. High-phosphorus diets are one cause of calcium deficiency. Natural foods high in phosphorus such as meats and whole grains also contain minerals. Cola drinks contain no minerals to compensate for the losses caused by the phosphorus.

A further problem with cola beverages is the form of phosphorus which is phosphoric acid. This acidic compound, combined with the sugar in the drink, definitely takes its toll on the teeth.

Oxidation Types And Decay

Many children are fast oxidizers. This may increase their tendency for tooth decay. Fast oxidizers continually lose calcium and magnesium through their urine. This depletes body reserves of calcium and magnesium unless these minerals are replaced. Calcium may be taken from bone structures to maintain calcium levels in the blood.

Fast oxidizers often drink milk. However, evidence indicates that the calcium in pasteurized milk may not be utilized as well as in unpasteurized milk. Milk is also high in phosphorus and low in magnesium. Magnesium is essential for calcium utilization. Phosphorus interferes with calcium and magnesium absorption.

A low copper level in many fast oxidizers also impairs the retention of calcium in the bones. Sweets in the diet have a very destabilizing effect on the fast oxidizer's metabolism. Fructose, a commonly used sweetener, aggravates a copper deficiency.

Slow oxidizers often have less tooth decay, but more gum disease and plaque formation. However, calcium, magnesium and copper may become bio-unavailable in slow oxidizers, leading to decalcification and decay of the teeth.

In summary, mineral-deficient diets favor tooth decay. Diets high in sugar and cola drinks also have adverse affects on the teeth. Toxic metals and imbalances in the oxidation rate can also result in tooth decay.

TMJ And Nutrition

TMJ refers to the temporo-mandibular joint, located just in front of the ears. Problems with this joint include tension, pain and even dislocation of the joint. Clicking and snapping sounds may be audible upon opening and closing the mouth. The mouth may close unevenly, causing wear on the teeth and grinding of the teeth during sleep.

TMJ problems have many causes, including malocclusion of the teeth, structural imbalances and increased tension of the masseter muscles (in the cheeks). Nutritional imbalances such as low or unavailable calcium and magnesium, zinc deficiency, copper imbalance or even a vitamin B deficiency may contribute to increased muscle tension.

Refined food diets can lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Stress from nutritional or other causes is a potent contributor to increased muscle tension.

While a nutritional balancing program may not be the complete answer for TMJ problems, it can be helpful to eliminate nutritional causes that retard healing and contribute to excessive tension on this most important joint.